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SUBJECT: SERBIA: UN PEACEKEEPING CHIEF GUEHENNO ON NORTHERN KOSOVO

BELGRADE 00000436 001.2 OF 002

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On May 5, UN Under Secretary General for Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO) Jean-Marie Guehenno briefed Contact Group ambassadors in Belgrade about his efforts to obtain buy-in for "practical arrangements" for future EULEX and UNMIK involvement in northern Kosovo. Guehenno, in Belgrade on his way from Pristina and en route to London and Brussels, described his talks with the governments in Kosovo and Serbia. He said Serbian and Kosovar leaders had listened to his proposal, but not yet "acquiesced." He provided few details of the substance of his proposed letter from Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon that would describe the reconfiguration of UNMIK, but emphasized that the details of such a reconfiguration would be negotiated by UNMIK's head after the letter had been sent out (after the May 11 Serbian elections). End summary.

Objective to Reduce Tensions over Northern Kosovo

¶2. (SBU) Guehenno described to Contact Group ambassadors to Serbia on May 5 his efforts to develop a workable solution for UNMIK to reconfigure so as to ensure that EULEX and ICO can function effectively throughout Kosovo after the Kosovar constitution comes into effect in mid-June. Guehenno stressed that Ban Ki-Moon's office sought to be "status neutral" and its role was not to resolve the principled differences between the governments in Pristina and Belgrade over Kosovo's independence and the role of the ICO and EULEX in Kosovo. He was not engaged in "Ahtisaari II or III." But, Guehenno stressed, if the UN secretariat didn't act, a situation would arise in which the international community would be unable to function in Northern Kosovo. The secretariat, he said, could not be passive and allow tensions to rise, which would negatively affect Kosovo's progress and possibly even lead to more violence. He sought to use the "UN umbrella" to prevent a bad outcome.

Broad Agreement to Develop Practical Solutions

13. (SBU) Guehenno said his objective in meetings with the governments of Serbia and Kosovo had been to get both sides to agree to seek practical solutions for Northern Kosovo, and he had not asked for any commitments from either government. He had emphasized to officials that any solutions would be within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and would not result in partition or co-governance. He said he had not discussed any details of a future agreement with either government. Guehenno said he would next travel to London then Brussels to clarify what kind of arrangement would be acceptable to the EU and the Contact Group.

Feedback from Belgrade

14. (SBU) In Belgrade, Guehenno met with President Tadic (Democratic Party, DS), Prime Minister Kostunica (Democratic Party of Serbia, DSS) and Kosovo Minister Samardzic (DSS), and finally with Samardzic and Foreign Minister Jeremic (DS). All interlocutors emphasized that Serbia still sought to annul Kosovo independence and their participation did not equate to recognition of Kosovo or agreement that EULEX should replace UNMIK. Guehenno said the tone of discussions had been more encouraging than he had expected. He said the Serbs were prepared to discuss a process to move away from a crisis situation. The Belgrade press reported May 5 and 6 only that the meetings had taken place; as parliamentary and local elections approach next weekend, all Serbian interlocutors chose to maintain an uncharacteristically disciplined silence on the UN initiative. When asked whether it made sense to talk with a

BELGRADE 00000436 002.2 OF 002

government that may not be around long, Guehenno reported that he had told Samardzic and Jeremic: "at least one of you will be in office after next week."

Next Steps: a Letter, then More Talks

15. (SBU) Guehenno said once he had obtained broad agreement from all stakeholders, the Secretary General would next send a letter to both governments shortly after the May 11 elections in Serbia. The letter would suggest approaches to managing six categories of administration of northern Kosovo--police, judiciary, customs, transportation and infrastructure, boundaries, and Serbian patrimony. In mid-May, the Secretary General would also inform the Security Council of his intentions. Next, the SRSG would begin negotiations to discuss specifics in the six categories. There would be no excessive expectations, no "big bang," he said. These talks would be addressed to all stakeholders.

Negotiations Could Be Lengthy

16. (SBU) Guehenno said he envisioned a great deal of shuttle diplomacy to hammer out the details. He cautioned that the pace of negotiations could be slow, given that Serbia's next government could take some time to form. It was unlikely that

any agreement would be concluded by June 15 when Kosovo's constitution came into force. Guehenno freely admitted that any arrangement was likely to be imperfect. He emphasized the Secretary General's commitment to involve all stakeholders.

Comment

[17](#). (SBU) Ambassadors reacted neutrally. Newly arrived Russian ambassador Konuzin insisted that "this is not a Contact Group meeting." Guehenno and his team seemed cautiously upbeat after their meetings in Pristina and Belgrade, but did not overestimate their chances of success. End comment.
MUNTER